

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 00236 121608Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 HA-05 IO-13 SSM-03
ACDA-12 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 /091 W

-----129439 121612Z /46

O 121505Z JAN 78

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6410

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORTIY

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY RZEQQ

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

SECDEF PRIORITY

USCINCEUR PRIORITY

UNINT BAGHDAD 684

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 0236

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, SY, AG, IQ

SUBJ: BOUMEDIENE VISIT AND REPORTED SYRIAN-IRAQI RECONCILIATION

1. PRESIDENT AL-ASSAD SPENT MOST OF JAN 11 CLOSETED IN HEAD-
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TO-HEAD DISCUSSIONS WITH PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENE ON THE QUESTIONS
TO STRENGTHENING THE "FRONT OF STEADFASTNESS" AND ACHIEVING
A SYRO-IRAQI RECONCILIATION. DURING COURSE OF DAY FOREIGN
MINISTER BOUTEFLIKA, ACCORDING TO MUHSIN BILAL (PRESIDENT,
COMMITTEE OF ARAB AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PEOPLE'S COUNCIL), FLEW
TO BAGHDAD AND RETURNED THE SAME EVENING TO RESOLVE FINAL
OBSTACLES TO AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. (COMMENT/

BILAL IS NEW AND UNTESTED SOURCE FOR US.)

2. GHASSAN RIFAI, EDITOR OF SYRIAN DAILY TISHRIIN, TOLD US JAN 11 HE HAD HEARD THAT A "STEADFASTNESS" SUMMIT WOULD SHORTLY BE HELD, ATTENDED BY CHIEFS OF STATE, AND THAT ONE POSSIBLE LOCATION FOR SUMMIT, IN ADDITION TO BAGHDAD, WAS ABU DHABI WHICH ASSAD REGARDS AS THE GULF STATE CLOSEST TO HIS POLITICAL THINKING.

3. WE DO NOT HAVE ANY CONFIRMED READING ON DETAILS OF REPORTED RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN IRAQ AND SYRIA BUT CONCLUDE FROM FONMIN KHADDAM'S CONVERSTATION AFTERNOON JAN 11 WITH CODEL WILLIAMS/ STEVENS, THAT SYRIA HAS NOT YET RETREATED ON ITS POSITION RE RESOLUTIONS 338 AND 242. IN PRIVATE CONVERSTATION WITH ME JAN 12, KHADDAM REFUSED TO GIVE ANY DETAILS RE RAPPROCHEMENT BEYOND STATING "DEVELOPMENTS ARE POSITIVE AND WE ARE BUILDING ON DECISIONS OF TRIPOLI SUMMIT." HE CONFIRMED BOUTEFLIKA'S BAGHDAD VISIT AND VALIDITY OF PRESS REPORT THAT BOUMEDIENE WILL SHORTLY VISIT BELGRADE AS ADDITIONAL FOLLOW-ON TO TRIPOLI SUMMIT.

4. COMMENT: FONMIN HAS EXPRESSED HIMSELF MORE STRONGLY OVER THE PAST WEEK IN HIS REJECTION OF GENEVA AS VIABLE OPTION IN LIGHT OF SADAT INITIATIVES. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT SYRIANS WILL HAVE TO PAY SOME POLITICAL PRICE FOR ANY RAPPROCHEMENT WITH REJECTIONIST IRAQ. TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION WITH IRAQ ON THE OTHER HAND
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WILL STRENGTHEN ASSAD'S HAND INTERNALLY AND INCREASE HIS ABILITY TO BRING PRESSURE ON JORDAN AND POSSIBLY EVEN SAUDI ARABIA TO STAND BACK FROM EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI TALKS. SYRO-IRAQI ACCOMMODATIONS WILL NOT MAKE THE JOB ANY EASIER OF CONVINCING ASSAD TO GIVE SADAT PROCESS A FAIR CHANCE.
MURPHY

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